

An Update to Planning for Reopening Our Schools

August 24, 2020



Current Plans and Strategies --

- Consulted with and followed guidance from VDOE, VDH, and CDC
- Developed an instructional plan that offers families a choice of in-person instruction or a 100% virtual learning option
 - ◆ Early input from staff and families supported a daily in-person plan with a shortened school day to provide time for teachers to work with virtual learners and plan for instruction.
 - ◆ About 25% of our students have elected for 100% virtual learning to start the year.
- Collaborated with VDH and school nurses to develop a Health & Safety Mitigation Plan
- Communicated plans and procedures with families and community

Current Plans and Strategies --

- Adopted a universal masking policy following CDC/VDH guidance
- Attended tabletop training with Virginia Dept. of Emergency Management
- Have communicated and collaborated with other school districts to develop plans and procedures
- Trained staff on COVID-19, classroom first aid, cleaning/disinfecting
- Continue to offer technology support and training to learn new tools
- Using CARES Act funds from the school and city allocations to purchase needed supplies

Current Plans and Strategies --

We have purchased:

- Chromebooks for all students K-8, carts, other equipment and instructional resources
- Face masks and face shields
- Gloves, PPE for nurses, thermometers
- Plexiglass shields for main office areas and for teachers who work with individual students and small groups
- Foggers, cleaning and disinfecting supplies
- Hand sanitizer, disinfecting wipes
- Signage to promote health and safety expectations

We know that students learn best at school.

Since March 13, 2020, we have worried about...

- Social and emotional wellness of our students without the supports from our teachers, counselors, and staff
- Lack of socialization and physical activity
- Academic learning gaps
- Lack of school nutrition
- Disconnect from our students and their families
- The critical role our schools play for the whole child and for our community

School Board Considerations

at the August 12th School Board
meeting....

- We revisited our plan after RCPS modified their plan.
- We agreed to move forward with the current plan at that time, monitoring community transmission data and any new updates or input in deciding if modifications to the plan would be needed.
- We have followed VDH COVID data daily/weekly.
- We have heard concerns and worries from many of our employees as they have prepared to start the school year.

Current concerns and considerations -

- Lexington/Rockbridge County is now considered an area of “moderate transmission” with fluctuating data.
- In areas of “moderate transmission”, VDH suggests that schools:
 - ◆ Consider Phase II guidance for reopening schools
 - ◆ Prioritize in-person instruction for most vulnerable learners: students with disabilities, English Learners, PreK-Third Grade students
 - ◆ Consider remote learning options for older students
 - ◆ Require cloth face coverings and strict social distancing

Current concerns and considerations -

- As the start to school gets closer and as teachers and staff returned to prepare for the new year, many of our staff have voiced real worries and fears.
 - ◆ Worries about planning to teach in a way we've never done before. Planning for virtual and in-person instruction is stressful, challenging, and time-consuming. We know there will be struggles before there will be successes, and this is a very difficult reality for educators even with the support of administration and parents.
 - ◆ Even with all the mitigation strategies put into place, there is still real fear and worry about staff and students contracting the virus and spreading it to others.
 - ◆ With all of these unknowns, these fears and worries are understandable and concerning and taking a toll on many.

Current concerns and considerations -

- While we have sincere worries and fears among many of our staff, we also worry about our students and their families because we know our community depends on our schools being open.
- Unknowns of COVID-19, delays in COVID testing
- HIPPA and FERPA privacy rules and challenges with contact tracing
- Concerns about inconsistency with school operations - potential quarantine of classes with positive cases, closing school, shift of schedules
- Lack of substitute teachers - We currently have 6 substitutes on our list.
- Budget/Finance: We are relying heavily on CARES Act funds to acquire needed materials and health/safety/cleaning supplies as a result of COVID.

What should be considered at this time?

- I am making a recommendation that the School Board consider implementing a Phase II reopening plan to provide 100% virtual learning for all students K-8 for the first nine weeks of school.
 - ◆ Many districts have moved to this, and a modified quarterly plan could allow us to start school safely with the lowest risk for students and staff, establish a consistent virtual instructional delivery model for all students, and monitor the community transmission levels and impact on our community over the next several months.
- Update the school calendar to delay the start date to September 8th and modify the calendar to add student days during the year.

What should be considered at this time?

- Continue to monitor VDH COVID data for our community and communicate regularly with VDH for guidance regarding K-12 schools
- Determine a plan for second quarter by the October 14th School Board meeting

What would instruction look like?

- All students K-8 will participate in 100% virtual learning M-F with 4 days of direct instruction from the teacher (M-Th) with “on your own” learning tasks, and 1 day of independent, asynchronous instruction (F).
- Teachers will be accessible on Fridays by email, phone, or conference.
 - ◆ Friday will serve as a collaborative planning and preparation day for teachers.
- Some students with specialized services (IEP or EL) may be offered in-person service time weekly as determined by their IEP team or case managers.
- Students will complete daily learning tasks for attendance and academic purposes. New instruction will be provided and grades will be assigned.

What would instruction look like?

- Teachers will provide “live”, synchronous instruction, offer recorded lessons, and asynchronous instruction to complete at home.
- Elementary students will follow a daily schedule with several developmentally appropriate blocks of teacher-guided instruction, “on your own” learning time, and breaks for lunch and movement.
- Middle school students will follow a daily schedule of core courses and an elective block with breaks between classes and a lunch/movement block.
 - ◆ Band would be offered as a virtual class.
 - ◆ All students will have a virtual P.E. class with a physical fitness log and health lessons.

Other details --

- Teachers and staff will work at school Monday-Friday.
- Health and safety mitigation strategies will be followed for everyone at school.
- Each K-8 student will be provided a school-owned Chromebook for at-home learning.
- LCS will offer weekly meals distribution for pre-order and pick-up at school.

Looking ahead and moving forward...

- None of these plans and decisions have been made lightly.
- We worry about our students being away from school for so long.
- We worry about our families who will struggle to make plans for their children when they are not in school.
- We worry about our staff with the stresses and fears about the unknowns of returning to school and how this impacts them personally and professionally.
- There is no “no-risk” or “right” plan to meet the needs of all involved.
- We can, however, determine the safest possible plan for students and staff to start the school year and make modifications as our situation changes.